THE SEED SOWER.

VOLUME VIII.

EDITED BY

THE REV. JOSEPH WOOD.

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The Seed Sower.

A Magazine for the Church, the School, and the Home.

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"The Greatest of These is Charity."

HYMN BY JOHN RUSKIN.

The beams of morning are renewed,
The valley laughs their light to see,
And earth is bright with gratitude,
And fairest heaven with Charitie.

Oh, dew of heaven; oh, light of earth,
Fain would our hearts be filled with thee,
Because nor darkness comes, nor death
About the home of Charitie.

God guides the stars their wandering way,
He seems to cast their courses free;
But binds unto Himself for aye,
And all their chains are Charitie.

When first He stretched the signed zone,
And heaped the hills and barred the sea,
Then Wisdom sat beside His throne,
But His own word was Charitie.

By noon and night, by sun and shower,
By dews that fall and winds that flee,
On grove and field, on fold and flower
To shed the peace of Charitie.

And still through every age and hour
Of things that were and things that be,
Are breathed the presence and the power
Of everlasting Charitie.

Ruskin,

THE INTERPRETER OF NATURE.

[AN ADDRESS GIVEN BY THE REV. J. WOOD, AT A RUSKIN MEMORIAL SERVICE, ON SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 4TH, 1900.]

I. SAM. ix. 9.—"He that is now called a prophet was beforetime called a seer."

It is just a fortnight ago that, ripe in years and his day's work throughly done, John Ruskin fell on his last sleep in his chamber overlooking Coniston Lake. He who had passed through many storms of controversy, and all his working days had been in opposition to accepted conventions, so incurring abuse, mocking, and enmities, came at last to a quiet eventide with its mellow light, and to an old age crowned with "honour, love, obedience, troops of friends." And when the burial came in the quiet churchyard of his own beloved Lake Country, all England stood by the open grave in reverence and gratitude for the gifts God had given men, taking captivity captive, by that royal soul. After a long life of battle, strain, and affliction, we saw a serene sunset, and rejoiced in a recognised triumph. The world has too often acknowledged its benefactors and teachers only when it began to build them some belated tomb. This was not so with Ruskin. He had lived

down all strife and won for himself, years before his death, the affection of multitudes of disciples in all English-speaking lands.

Now that he has gone from us, it is wise and good to recall what he did for the world, how he impressed his age, the remarkable and quickening influence he exercised on thought and life. Him, too, we number among

"The goodly fellowship of the prophets."

For if the true test of a prophet be the power to kindle the hearts and consciences of his hearers as with a live coal from the very altar of God, Ruskin was as truly a prophet as Elijah or Isaiah. Call to mind the enormous mass of stirring thought, ethical passion, and melodious speech about a thousand things, human and divine, good and beautiful, which he gave to men. Remember the immense range of his teaching. In art, in social reform, in education, in religion, and in many other directions, see how his words shaped and moulded, changed and revolutionised the beliefs and ideals of men. They cover every phase of nature and art. They deal with history, economics, civilisation, Biblical interpretation, archæology, sculpture, painting, the past and future, and all rules of human duty. "He had understanding exceeding much and largeness of heart, even as the sand on the sea-shore, and his fame was in all nations round about. He spake to us of trees, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop on the wall; he spake also of beasts and fowl, of creeping things and fishes." He spake also of deeper things; of the duties of common life; of the training of the young; of the nobility of industry; of the purity of the home; of the sanctities of humility, uprightness, and reverence; of peace and war; of the saving power of "admiration, hope, and love." "Do you look out," wrote George Eliot in her early days, "for Ruskin's books when they appear? I venerate him as one of the greatest teachers of the age for truth, sincerity, nobleness. He teaches with the inspiration of a Hebrew Prophet." And Carlyle wrote to Emerson: "Do you read Ruskin? If you don't, do, I advise you. There is nothing going on among us so notable to me."

Not that Ruskin, as a prophet, had anything new to say, any new doctrine or new philosophy to propound. He always repudiated with the utmost scorn and indignation the idea that he came to men with any new message. If Truth, Sincerity, Nobleness are, as George Eliot declared, the watchwords of Ruskin's Gospel, they are at the same time as old as the hills. Ruskin's power is in their fearless application to every phase of modern life. His originality as an art critic was the vehement force with which he insisted that Truth and Purity are the very essence of all noble artistic work and vigour. Art for Ruskin meant, what religion means—Love, Reverence, Sincerity. "Great art," he tells us, "is the type of strong and noble life." No one can read *Modern Painters*, or *The Stones of Venice*, or *The Seven Lamps*, without seeing that the ethical element is the deepest thing in Ruskin, the foundation rock not only of his character but of all his teaching, whether concerning art or life.

And when we turn from his art teaching to his more directly moral and religious teaching in such books as the *Crown of Wild Olive*, or *Sesame and Lilies*, we feel that his ethics of art gives his ethics of life a new and grander significance. "A fuller light illumines all." His power as a seer is a stepping stone to his power as a prophet. "He that is now called a prophet was beforetime called a seer." This is Ruskin's history—first, a seer; then a prophet. It was given to him, as it is given to all true artists and poets, to see more than others see; to see, and to teach his fellowmen to see, the beauty of God's world, and to be enthusiastic in its admiration; to see, and to enable others to see, a glory in the grass, and a splendour in the flower to which they were blind before; to see, and to open the eyes of multitudes to see also, the loveliness of a mountain curve, and the chord of colour in an evening cloud. This was Ruskin's first work as a seer. By-and-by he saw deeper things, and spake them forth, even the things of God and the soul, of truth and duty, of love and purity. But his first work was to reveal to men the graces and secrets of natural beauty, to open dull eyes to the radiance of the outward world; in cloud and mountain, in mosses and grasses, in leaf and insect's wing, in wave of the sea and torrent of the hills to discover the things of loveliness. He became their seer. But the same intense vision which saw precious things in nature hidden from others, saw also the relations of God and man, and

of human soul to nature, and of nature to ethics, with a veracity that gave new interest and vividness to religion, transforming the seer into the prophet.

PERSONALITY.

What a fascinating and picturesque personality was his. Now tender, now stern; now playful, now sardonic; now earnest and now mocking; now full of thunders and lightnings, and now sweet and musical as Apollo's lyre—what many-sidedness! Think of the scorn with which he replied to someone asking for help to pay off a chapel debt, and then remember how he gave away all the fortune, £200,000, left him by his father. Think of his many onslaughts on Bishops, and then think of his opening a tea-shop in Marylebone that the poor might not be swindled in their purchases. Think of his fierce attack on the popular and orthodox political economy of the day, and then think of him writing little dancing songs for the children of a village school. Here is one—*

Put off, put off your mail, ye kings, and beat your brands to dust;
A surer grasp your hands must know; your hearts a better trust;
Nay, bend aback the lance's point, and break the helmet bar,—
A noise is on the morning winds, but not the noise of war.

Among the grassy mountain paths the glittering troops increase.
They come! they come!—how fair their feet—they come that publish peace.
Yea! Victory! fair victory! OUR ENEMIES AND OURS,
And all the clouds are clasped with light, and all the earth with flowers.

Ah! still depressed and dim with dew; but yet a little while
And radiant with the deathless Rose the wilderness shall smile;
And every tender living thing shall feed by streams of rest,
Nor lamb shall from the fold be lost, nor nursling from the nest.

Of course, I do not say that everything from Ruskin's life was marked by wisdom, or is to be accepted as gospel. He was so various in his moods that necessarily all his teaching is not of the same value. We can honour and reverence him without swearing obedience to his every word. A man may be a sincere Ruskinian without following such counsels of perfection as to abjure tobacco, or to wait seven years before he marries his sweetheart. There are a good number of *obiter dicta* in Ruskin's writings, which must be taken with a grain of salt. Like all men of genius he gave utterance to many a paradox. He saw the truth of to-day so clearly that he spoke of it as if there were no other truth worth considering. He could be grotesque as well as serious, and this the dull people did not understand!

INTERPRETER OF NATURE'S BEAUTY.

Never, perhaps, did anyone so wonderfully and perfectly fulfil the office of interpreter of Nature as Ruskin. His first utterances are those of one who teaches us to appreciate Nature's beauty. He has put new beauty for us into the sky, and the clouds, and the rainbow; into the seas—at rest or in storm; into the mountains and the lakes; into flowers and grasses; into

*Alas! How widely different are the sentiments just now held up for admiration in our village schools—not peace, but bloody war is the theme of our modern school song. Kindness and humanity are played-out virtues, and children are taught to glory in the boy bugler who shot three Boers with his own hand. See the following from the *Daily Alarmist*:—

THE BOY THAT SHOT THREE BOERS.

ENGLISH BOYS AND GIRLS SEND HIM A CHRISTMAS PRESENT.

"Trumpeter Shurlock, who with his own hand shot three Boers at Elands Laagte, has stirred a practical responsive chord in the hearts of patriotic boys and girls at Benhall School, Saxmundham, Suffolk.

"We have received from Mr. John Chambers, the schoolmaster, a watch and chain, subscribed for by the children, and accompanied by a letter intended for the trumpeter of the 5th Lancers. Here is the letter which Trumpeter Shurlock's youthful admirers are sending him:—

"'Dear Trumpeter Shurlock,—Our schoolmaster reads us the war news every morning, and what we liked best was to hear about you, and how you shot the three Boers, and we thought we should like to send you a Christmas present. We thought at first we would send you a plum pudding, and then a flannel shirt, but we got too much money for that. So, as some kind friends helped us, we got enough to send you a watch and chain, which we hope you will accept.

"'If ever you come to Suffolk, we hope you will call and see us, so that we may give you a cheer.

"'Please let us know if you get it, and if you like it?

"'Hoping you will come safe home, and be able to show it to your mother. We are pleased you are our countryman, and we hope if any of us are ever soldiers, we will do our duty like you.

"'Wishing you all good luck, we remain,

"'Your young English friends,

"'GERTIE RACKHAM,

"'FRANK CHAMBERS.

"'(For the children of Benhall School.)'"

crystals and gems. We look upon the Alps, and upon the rose on a cottage wall, with new eyes since he wrote about them. How many there are who can say they owe to Ruskin a kind of new sense, or rather the quickening of their hitherto slumbering senses. Eyes had they, but they did not see; now they see marvellous things. Ears had they, but they did not hear; now they hear a music that is wonderful beyond all conception. New realms have been opened to men in the universe of God since they read *Modern Painters* and *The Eagle's Nest*. There is now nothing that grows on the earth, nothing that flies in the air, no lowly weed, no irridescence of dove's wings, no floating cloud, no tumbling wave, no opening frond, that is not in some way related to God and the soul in our thoughts, and that is not a source of unspeakable delight. Ruskin has taught us that all day long we are walking the aisles of God's great cathedral, and reading the pages of a Bible, grander and more impressive than any copied on parchment or multiplied by the printing press. Behold!—not here, indeed, among grimy streets and squalid courts, but in the fair, sweet country—behold! the world of Nature and its ever-changing beauty! There are no such frescoes in art as God's hand paints in the heavens. In the budding, blossoming days of spring; in the golden days of summer; in the fruitful days of autumn; in the stormy days of winter; in every day of the year there is something which is a separate leaf in God's great Nature-Bible. Ruskin has taught us to see forms and colours and graces and all the glory of God in these outward objects, in which many discern nothing but fuel for the fire and fodder for the cattle. There are perhaps five special directions in which Ruskin's work as a revealer and interpreter of Nature's beauty has been unique. He has taught of the clouds, of trees, of mountains, of grasses, and of the sea, with a power, freshness, and charm no other prose writer has ever succeeded in reaching. Listen to him discoursing about the commonest and cheapest growths of earth—the grass beneath our feet:

> Gather a single blade of grass, and examine for a minute, quietly, its narrow sword-shaped strip of fluted green. Nothing, as it seems, there of notable goodness or beauty. A very little strength and a very little tallness, and a few delicate long lines meeting in a point,—not a perfect point neither, but blunt and unfinished, by no means a creditable or apparently much-cared-for, example of nature's workmanship, made, only to be trodden on to-day, and to-morrow to be cast into the oven,—and a little pale and hollow stalk, feeble and flaccid, leading down to the dull brown fibres of roots. And yet, think of it well, and judge whether, of all the gorgeous flowers that beam in summer air, and of all strong and goodly trees, pleasant to the eyes, or good for food,—stately palm and pine, strong ash and oak, scented citron, burdened vine—there be any by man so deeply loved, by God so highly graced, as that narrow point of feeble green. And well does it fulfil its mission. Consider what we owe to the meadow grass, to the covering of the dark ground by that glorious enamel, by the companies of those soft and countless, and peaceful spears. The fields! Follow forth but for a little time the thoughts of all that we ought to recognise in these words. All spring and summer is in them—the walks by silent, scented paths—the rests in noonday heat,—the joy of herd and flocks,—the power of all shepherd life and meditation,—the life of sunlight upon the world falling in soft blue shadows where else it would have struck upon the dark mould, or scorching dust. Pastures beside the pacing brooks, soft banks, and knolls of lowly hills, thymy slopes of down, overlooked by the blue line of lifted sea, crisp lawns, all dim with early dew, or smooth in evening warmth of barred sunshine, dinted by happy feet, and softening in their fall the sound of loving voices,—all these are summed in those simple words; and these are not all. We may not measure to the full the depth of this heavenly gift in our own land, though still as we think of it longer, the infinite of that meadow sweetness, Shakespeare's peculiar, joy, would open on us more and more; yet we have it but in part. Go out in the spring-time among the meadows that slope from the shores of the Swiss lakes to the roots of their lower mountains. There, mingled with the taller gentians, and the white narcissus, the grass grows deep and free; and as you follow the winding mountain path, beneath arching boughs, all veiled with blossom—paths that for ever droop and rise over the green banks and mounds, sweeping down in scented undulation steep to the blue water, studded here and there with new-mown heaps, filling all the air with fainted sweetness—look up towards the higher hills, where the waves of everlasting green roll silently into their long inlets among the shadows of the pines, and we may perhaps at last know the meaning of those quiet words of the 147th Psalm, "He maketh grass to grow upon the mountains."

Is not this a great function, a marvellous power, the function and power of the seer, by which the minds of common men are trained to delight in all that is fair and lovely in nature? For he who is taught to see and rejoice with "the jocund daffodils" has something in him which will go far to keep him from greed and cruelty, and he who has learned to be happy in the mountain torrent filling the hills with hollow thunder and the vales with winding light, has a grace which will make all repining flee away.

Beauty has been appointed by God to be one of the elements by which the soul is continually nourished and constrained, and he who reveals to us the loveliness of the world sheds upon life some of its most humanizing influences. It is the blessed work of men like Ruskin, the seers and the lovers of beauty, to open to their fellow men the sealed book of Heaven and Earth, to make their hearts thrill with the lessons which flow from the glory of God in the beauty of the world, and to make the beauty of the world a mirror of human life and a parable of the soul's most sacred experiences.

Ruskin as Social Reformer.

John Ruskin was the last of the giants of the nineteenth century. Now that he is gone it is natural for us to ask what was his message, and what were his limitations. I want to begin with his limitations, because I am sure that there are many who are so irritated by some of his utterances that they distrust all his teaching. Like most imaginative reformers he sometimes called "wolf" when there was no wolf, and there is a danger that we should ignore his cry when he draws attention to the real animal gnawing at the vitals of the nation. His chief limitation seen in his writings on social problems is a want of sympathy with the best in modern life. What wonderful sympathy and understanding he has for old myths, old buildings, old pictures, old ways of life! How he delights in making us see the wholesomeness of beauty and religious depth of feeling in the national life of the Jews, Greeks, Romans, and Italians long ago! Even for some of his contemporaries, if they are older than himself, and especially if they are unpopular, he has a deep admiration. No great creator in music or literature or colour has ever had such a monument erected to his fame, or such wealth of thought and imagery and sympathetic interpretation bestowed upon his works as Ruskin has given to Turner in his "Modern Painters." But when we think of modern life, with its marvellous discoveries in science, its engineering feats, its mechanical inventions, its philanthropies, its infinite variety, we find that Ruskin is out of sympathy with it all. There is little attempt to discover good among the evil. Our science, our commerce, our buildings, even our charity and our religion, are condemned as worthless or shameful. Undoubtedly there is much that is shameful in modern life, and more that is worthless, and we should be thankful that Ruskin has spoken so strongly and bravely of these things, making us feel that we are a "sinful nation, laden with iniquity." But I miss in his writings the conviction that God is still here in this strange welter of competitive forces—except indeed as a God of wrath. What we in England need more than all else is a great teacher who should see our faults and weaknesses as Ruskin did and tell us of them with a bold and loving severity, and who should see further the germs of good, the buds of promise in our modern life. It is a cause for thankfulness when a man tells us plainly of our half-unknown or forgotten faults. We need teachers who shall see and make us see our national selfishness and misery. But it is an even greater cause for thankfulness when a man tells us of our half-unknown or forgotten virtues, when he makes us feel our strength and gives us self-respect and hope. There is something divine even in this money-loving, mechanical, jingoistic, modern England if we had wit enough to see it. Undoubtedly our civilisation, with its factories and railroads and telegraphs and ironclads and guns, is a great deal less strong and less beautiful than we have been thinking. We have been living in a fool's paradise, conceited and arrogant, imagining ourselves the wisest and richest, and best nation on the face of the earth. We have been priding ourselves on the wrong things, like the stag in the fable we have been admiring our horns and despising our legs. The showy, ornamental part of life was our pride. We have not taken pride enough in that part of the body politic which is in touch with Mother Earth, that part which supports the rest. In this sense we have thought far too well of ourselves, and our ideals have been misplaced, and our eyes are being opened by stern adversity to some of our weaknesses and sins. All this I grant to Ruskin and his followers. But I do not find in him the power to see the best in us, the power of encouragement, which is even more important than the power of rebuke. Our modern life, with all the faults of its commerce, its competition, its arming of nation against

nation, is a phase through which we must pass to something higher: we cannot go back to earlier forms. What we shall be must grow out of what we are, and the man who appreciates the best that is in us to-day is preparing us for better things to-morrow. So much I have been impelled to say after a re-reading of a good deal of Ruskin's teaching on social problems. He did not see the germs of good in modern life so clearly as he saw our faults and weaknesses. But I say this all the more easily because I am more deeply impressed than ever with the vital importance of much of his teaching. We do not mind mentioning a limitation in someone we admire when we feel that he is so great that there are still innumerable reasons for admiring and for loving him.

The *Times*, of January 22nd, has a curious appreciation, half true, half false. "When at last he ceased to write the generation appeared colder and more prosaic for its release from his upbraidings. He leaves behind him the memory of a generous and noble character, of which the worse defects were a tendency to exaggerate the beauties of intrinsic moral worth and the deformities of intrinsic meanness."

It is entirely true that we miss his upbraidings; there was always some truth in them and always complete sincerity even when they seemed most exaggerated. But it is not true that his worst defect was "a tendency to exaggerate the beauty of intrinsic moral worth." That was, it seems to me, the pith and marrow of his teaching, its greatest strength and excellence. You cannot exaggerate the beauty and importance of moral worth. Ruskin believed with all his soul and tried to make us believe that art, commerce, happiness, national strength, depend entirely on obedience to the laws of God. All that is beautiful, all that is great, all that is lasting grows out of goodness. As he says of Venice, so he would say of Rome and Greece, and of all the kingdoms that have passed away: it is wickedness, disobedience, vice alone which were the cause of their fall. "For a thousand years they fought for life; for three hundred they invited death; their battle was rewarded and their call was heard." That is a lesson which England needs to-day as much as she ever did.

Would to God there was a Ruskin still writing with that splendid eloquence of conviction to force it on our minds! Our nation is not convinced to the depth of its heart that greatness depends on goodness, on obedience to God's laws. We are inclined to think we can be rich and happy and prosperous and powerful, and that all may go well with us without troubling ourselves very much about morality and religion; they are good things, of course, but they are not the essentials. National strength, we think, depends on plenty of money and guns and ironclads and men. Ruskin bids us look deeper and asserts, with passionate conviction, that it is the character of a nation on which, in the long run, all strength, all beauty, all prosperity depends. No wealth, no guns, no ships, no multitude of men can keep a money-loving nation from decay. The spirit of greed, of sensuality, of pleasure-seeking leads to death.

As I look at it there is no fault nor folly of my life—and both have been many and great—that does not rise up against me and take away my joy and shorten my power of possession, of sight, of understanding, and every past effort of my life, every gleam of rightness and good in it, is with me now to help me in my grasp. So far as I can rejoice in or interpret beauty, my power is owing to what of right there is in me. I dare to say it, that because through all my life I have desired good and not evil; because I have been kind to many, have wished to be kind to all; have wilfully injured none; and because I have loved much and not selfishly; therefore the morning light is yet visible to me on these hills, and you who read may trust my thought and word in such work as I have to do for you, and you will be glad afterwards that you have trusted them.

Ruskin has said some strange things of modern commercial life, and fails to see any possibilities of good in it. But he has said some very true and searching things as well.

It is easy to imagine an enthusiastic affection exi ting among soldiers for the colonel. Not so easy to imagine an enthusiastic affection among cotton spinners for the proprietor of the mill. A body of men, associated for purposes of robbery (as a Highland clan in ancient times), shall be animated by perfect affection, and every member be ready to lay down his life for the life of his chief. But a band of men associated for purposes of legal production and accumulation is usually animated, it appears, by no such emotion, and none of them are in any wise willing to give his life for the life of the chief.

It was this lack of the heroic in modern life, of the spirit of sacrifice and self-forgetfulness, which repelled him from our commerce, our politics, our philanthropies. I do not think the heroic is so entirely absent as it seemed to him: at worst it was sleeping and not dead. But we

all know how little there is in our lives and our work, how sordid and self-centred and contented we are. There is no voice in the nineteenth century which has called to us with such power, no one who has rebuked us with such boldness, no one who has shown the misery and weakness of selfishness with such vividness and conviction as Ruskin. The more we know ourselves the less shall we be irritated by his exaggeration, and the more we shall be grateful to him for his rebukes.

HENRY GOW.

OUR ANCIENT CHAPELS.

Deptford.

Five miles below London Bridge, on the south bank of the Thames, lies the borough of Deptford. Separated from Greenwich by a river creek, the *deep ford*, or point of crossing, probably explains its name. In its royal dockyard Queen Elizabeth knighted Drake and Peter the Great worked as a shipwright. Here, too, in Deptford, Kit Marlowe was killed and then buried in St. Nicholas Churchyard. Here lived, at different dates, Lord Howard, Admiral Benbow and Grinling Gibbons; also, at Sayes Court, John Evelyn, of Diary fame. Evelyn, in his diary, under date April 10th, 1687, says, "There was a wonderful concourse of people at the Dissenters' Meeting House in this parish, and the Parish Church left exceeding thin. What this will end in, God Almighty only knows, but it looks like confusion, which I pray God avert."

This Dissenters' meeting, with its crowded congregation, which caused Evelyn such pious concern, was the predecessor of the building shewn in the above engraving. The congregation, apparently of Baptist origin, goes back beyond 1687, probably to the beginning of the century, for it was well established in the reign of Charles I. In 1801 it was joined by another Baptist congregation from Horsleydown, under the one pastorate of Joseph Brown, a student of Dr. Doddridge, at Northampton, and for many years secretary of the General Baptist Assembly. His predecessors were John Clayton, Richard Adams, George White, Nathaniel Foxwell, Ralph Gould, Benjamin Ingram, James Richardson, and Samuel Fry. He died after thirty-seven years' ministry, and is interred in the chapel yard. Joseph Brown was followed in turn by William Moon, who preached his funeral sermon; Edwin Chapman, who had previously ministered at Chatham; John Omer Squier, who stayed twenty years, having previously been at Saffron Walden; Michael Castle Gascoigne, who ministered thirty-five years, having previously been at Framlingham; Thomas Timmins and Samuel Burrows, who served one year each; and the minister at the present, the Rev. Alfred Marchant, whose ministry began in 1891.

The old chapel and its two old vestries having fallen into need of repairs, a new room has recently been added to the building, and the latter re roofed, re decorated, and re opened. At the opening meeting, presided over by the president of the Provincial Assembly, references were made to the interesting circumstance that Benjamin Disraeli and Milner Gibson attended the chapel when boys at school. An interesting letter of reminiscences, bearing upon this and other associations, was read from Miss Squier, a daughter and grand-daughter of two former ministers, from which we are permitted to take the following extracts:—

Two editors of distinguished papers have lately brought the old Nonconformist place of Deptford before the public in an interesting manner, and have alluded to a "tradition, for which there seems some foundation," that Benjamin Disraeli attended the chapel when a lad, during the ministry of Rev. William Moon. Now I, a grand-daughter of this minister, can say on most reliable authority that this was a fact. Mr. Potecary, who kept a school for gentlemen's sons on Blackheath, and was himself a Unitarian, came to chapel on a Sunday morning, bringing three of his boys with him, according to the wishes of their friends. And each of these lads in after life became a statesman. One I do not remember; the others were Lord Beaconsfield and the Right Hon. Thos. Milner Gibson. The latter was a ward of my grandfather's, and he was left behind with his guardian to spend the rest of the day at his house, and to be sent back to school in the evening in a hackney coach, under the care of Mr. Campi n, an old member of the church. Both the lads I have mentioned were rather reserved and thoughtful boys, the first very fond of reading, and the

other of scientific experiments. My grandfather gave him a little building in the garden for his chemicals.

The three schoolboys were sources of interest to the pastor and congregation, but who could imagine the future before them? That the Jewish lad, with his dreamy eyes and dark curls, who was always polite and observant, would be Prime Minister of England! The Pastor's ward was always a favourite, a delicate child and old-fashioned like Paul Dombey. When he left Blackheath for the Charter-House School, his health suffered from the cruel "fagging system." Once when he spilt a drop of the hot water he was taking to the Don, his master, he was kicked down the stone stairs, and the poor little fellow was found insensible, with nothing but his little shirt to protect him from bruises.

The pew in which the master and his boys sat, was, I beleve, on the right hand of the pulpit, near the vestry door. In the other corner, left of the pulpit, was Mr. Brent's pew, once filled by his large family. He came in his carriage, and his sons rode in on horseback. There were so many horses ridden to the chapel in those days that two stables were built, one each side of the gates, for their use. I believe the chapel was fairly filled in Mr. Moon's time with an influential congregation. But Deptford went down, and the gentry went away. The closing of the dockyard was the ruin of the town. My grandfather died, as you know, in the prime of life. In politics he was a Liberal, was full of sympathy for Queen Caroline in the attack made on her character by her consort. When she came to England to take her trial he went to Dover to see her arrive, and ran with some other gentlemen into the sea, to pull ashore the little boat in which she sat, wearing a white hat and feathers as a sign of innocence. When, through the remarkable ability of Lord Brougham, the injured woman was acquitted, Deptford was a blaze of light, and my grandfather's house amongst the most brilliantly illuminated.

The Rev. Edwin Chapman succeeded my grandfather. My father followed Mr. Chapman. He had already married my mother, the eldest daughter of Mr. Moon. He was a decided Liberal and Reformer. The great Reform Bill was passed before my life began, but very early the questions discussed at my grandmother's house filled my infant mind with interest. My father worked with the Quakers a good deal—there were some good specimens at Deptford—Harts, Cobbets, Sewells, &c., and he was in the Friends' Meeting House helping to draw up a petition, I believe, on Roman Catholic Emancipation, when he was called to the death-bed of my young mother. She passed away, leaving him in a desolate home with three infant children—one newly born (and a few young gentlemen pupils.) One of their boarders was Mr. Bernard Brent, a grandson of that excellent woman, Mrs. Priscilla Price, of Dover. My grandma took two children, the poor baby was put out to nurse, the pupils were dismissed, and my father went into lodgings. It was heart-breaking. But he threw himself into every good work possible—the Cause of Peace, the Anti-Slavery Cause, Temperance, the Repeal of the Corn Laws, the Abolition of Capital Punishment. In these last two he worked with his friend, Wm. Johnson Fox, a man for whom he had great admiration and respect. He visited at his house, and was full of sympathy for his difficulties. It is, I think, to my father's honour that he was equally welcome as a guest to Mr. and Mrs. Fox. My father was a great lover of justice. The Removal of Jewish Disabilities he took up, and was strong on the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. After he left Deptford, I once met a member of the Masden family, of Lewisham, who said to me, "I much enjoyed your father's ministry. We were in harmony on almost all subjects. I was delighted to hear him preach against cruelty to animals, and pray to God, with his people, to help us to always treat his useful and beautiful creatures with kindness."

I have now told something of the boys whose future was to be so important, and of the earnest man whose pastorate extended over so many years.

Now, a word more about the congregation. The minister's pew in which we all sat was on his left hand, just below the pulpit. The next little pew was occupied by two ladies, name forgotten. In the corner—the

Brent's pew—sat Mrs. Jones, once Frances Brent, with several members of her family. Then the Kingsford's of the great bakery, where sea-biscuits for ships were made in large abundance. This pew was well filled with mother, sons, and daughters. The next was the Kiddel's pew. Mr. and Mrs. Kiddel, Miss Dawson (sister of the latter), Miss Kiddel and her mother, and Mr. Montmorency, to whom she was engaged, were all very regular attendants. A family of the name of Stevens used to take a house on Blackheath in the summer. Mr. S. was an alderman of the city, and their large family filled the two next pews, I think, or they may have sat at the bottom of the chapel. There, I know, sat Mr. Esdaile, a banker, with his wife and children, Mr. Marsden, of the Brewery, Lewisham, with his two sons and two daughters, Mr. Titcombe and his sister, an elderly lady and gentleman, who lived near Greenwich Park. Most of these families drove to chapel, it was too far to walk, but they were very regular; I am speaking now of the time I can remember, when I was about 10 years old. The middle of the chapel was scarcely used till my aunt Charlotte, my grandfather's youngest daughter, started a Sunday school. That prospered well, and brought some young people and parents of children to the service.

The singing was conducted by a clerk, who stood in a desk under the pulpit. He had a good knowledge of music, and at one time a fine voice, but though he was a good, kind man, he was irritable, and if one of the congregation got a little out of tune he would flourish a tuning fork and look so angry that they were afraid of him, and so he often gave the hymns as a solo, which he rather enjoyed. As a rule, my father sang too, as he was out of reach of the angry looks, not that Mr. R. would have visited them upon him, one reason being that my father had a good voice and understood music.

My aunt had an old cabinet piano brought from my grandma's house for use in the Sunday School, and then old Mr. Robinson would give her no peace (she was a great favourite of his) till she consented to play the hymn tunes at the service. You see this was all very primitive. The dear old man's crossness was nothing—he was much respected and beloved, and when my father was called on to preach his funeral sermon, which was published, the chapel was crowded. I must just mention that the outlook from the chapel was neat, and nice, and pleasant. The Trinity grounds were just opposite, with their gardens full of flowers, in which we used often to walk after morning service.

Some of the new leaders think "the old Unitarians' fed their flocks with the dry and not always nourishing food of controversy. But I know that, though they taught them to have a reason for the hope that was in them, their great aim was to raise up character to the stature of the beauty of Christ. "Thy Kingdom come" was their constant prayer, and the hastening of that kingdom their continual effort. "Instead of the fathers shall be the children," and may the children be as brave and faithful as the fathers. They have a noble ancestry. May they, by the grace of God, fulfil the destiny to which He calls them.

FRANK K. FREESTON.

Types of Service.

III.—THE HANDICRAFTSMAN.

The chapter in Ecclesiasticus which begins with praise of the physician ends with praise of the handicraftsman: "Without these shall not a city be inhabited; they will maintain the fabric of the world."

Amongst the Jews no form of manual labour was despised, unless it involved risk of ceremonial uncleanness. There is, perhaps, a touch of contempt in the mention of "hewers of wood and drawers of water," but it is the little skill required rather than the meanness of occupation that is glanced at. When we come to the artificer, our author speaks of him, not as a workman, but as a "workmaster." He presents him as the master of his work, not its slave, finding an artist's delight in the thing which grows under his hands. A great gap there may have been in Jewish art, from our point of view; the artist, in our sense, hardly appears; the painter or sculptor, when he does appear, is generally a foreigner, imported under foreign influence for a special purpose; and this for the reason that the representation of men and animals was generally abhorrent to Jewish religious feeling. But if art is the perfected expression of delight, we find it here in the common craft of the smith and the carpenter, the potter and the engraver. It is not so much his work that is described as his absorbed interest, his unremitting devotion, his eagerness to excel, his manly pride: "His diligence is to make great variety; he wrestles with his work; he is wakeful to finish it; he sets his heart upon perfecting it; each becomes wise in his own work." This is a lofty strain arising out of a lofty conception of handiwork, a conception strengthened, not weakened, by actual observation.

Our own Son of Sirach has said very much the same thing, in very much the same way. "Observe," cries Mr. Ruskin, "the peace of heart and contentment in doing a simple thing" of the Greek workman: how "he has an entire masterhood of his business up to the required point;" how he "does not reach after other people's strength, nor outreach his own." In another place he deplores the endeavour of these

days to separate the craftsman from the artist: "We want one man to be always thinking, and another to be always working, and we call one a gentleman and the other an operative. We make both ungentle, the one envying, the other despising, his brother; and the mass of society is made up of morbid thinkers and miserable workers. It is only by labour that thought can be made healthy, and only by thought that labour can be made happy, and the two cannot be separated with impunity. It would be well if all of us were good handicraftsmen in some kind, and the dishonour of manual labour done away with altogether . . . . if there were no trenchant distinction of employment, as between idle and working men, or between men of liberal and illiberal professions. All professions should be liberal, and there should be less pride felt in peculiarity of employment, and more in excellence of achievement." Are not these the thoughts of the Jewish sage, worked out to wider conclusion?

We are not, however, comparing British with Jewish workmanship; nor would comparison be possible, for the conditions are not the same. We have turned art into industry, handicraft into manufacture. Our aim is, not creation, but production; our diligence is, not "to make great variety," but to turn out to pattern, to keep up to sample; the artificer is a tradesman, and a company of artificers a trade union. Time-work and piece-work leave little room for heart-work. Who would say of the skilled worker now: "He will set his heart to preserve likeness in his portraiture; He will set his heart upon perfecting his work; He will apply his heart to finish the glazing?" A workman will now "put in" so many hours, but we hardly expect him to put in much heart. And it would be idle to complain. If we want our craftsmen to live the craft-life, we must alter the present conditions of social life; we must unmake modern taste and habit, forbid the excessive division of labour, and take away the pressure of competition, and many of the difficulties of livelihood and self-maintenance which now beset him in a crowded population.

But common points remain, and from these our moral shall be drawn. Whatever may be said of mental and emotional change, the bodily toil of mechanic art is the same, and might almost be told in the same words: "The vapour of the fire will waste his flesh; and in the heat of the furnace will he wrestle with his work: the noise of the hammer will be ever in his ear; he is always anxiously set at his work, and he will be wakeful to make clean the furnace." And to manual toil we may add manual skill. If delight in the expression and variation of thought and feeling is gone, delight in technical mastery is left—"each becometh wise in his own work"—clearness of object, grasp of means, of details, certainty of touch, of test, of judgment—qualities which often put our untrained, unmethodical ways to shame. Promptness and thoroughness, and directness of attack, and control of hand and eye, and quiet calculation, and quiet execution—all this you may see, if you only stand for five minutes by a carpenter's bench.

But the main point, and the most admirable, is the enormous social value of such work; "Without these shall not a city be inhabited; They will maintain the fabric of the world;" and not the least part of its social, because moral, value is its modesty. A great building is finished, a great ship is launched, great engines drive her through the waves, a great bridge is thrown across a river, mines are worked, hills are tunnelled, metals are cast, the loom and the lathe and the printing-press supply a thousand wants, and honour is done to him who draws the first plan, or gives the largest sum, to him who lays a foundation-stone, or declares the finished structure open, but the men who carry out the work, and do not leave it until it is done, leave it unthanked the moment it is done, and are scattered away until they are wanted again—who takes account of them? Yet the fabric of the world, its material strength, its material wealth, its trade, its commerce, rests on them. It is in the day's work, they would say, to be unknown, but this acceptance of obscurity, this withdrawal of self from that which is achieved, and the leaving of the praise to others, are a rebuke to our self-consciousness and eagerness for notice in the often very unimportant things we do. It is true that each man's part is lost in the whole, and cannot always be distinguished as his own, but the collective strength of the operative class is gigantic, and on nothing does our national greatness rest more than this, that that strength is rarely abused.

Some abuse there may be. There are faults which are favoured, if not produced, by strong association, and it would be strange if Trade Unionism were wholly exempt from these. We are thinking now of the individual worker. He submits to discipline, he lives by rule, he is able at the end of the day to point to so much work done, so much wealth added to the common stock. How does this stand beside the drifting, vacant aimlessness of those who need not work for a living, and have no desire to work for anything else? Have they the wisdom that comes only from long and chastened experience? In what department of duty can they show apprenticeship? Where is their public utility? What is their exact contribution to the community? Here, then, is another example of service, another cast of character. Nor are they excluded from the scheme of that high ministry which gathers to itself and glorifies all honourable service. The apostle who draws images of Christian effort from the camp and the arena, draws at least one from the workshop: "Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed."

E. P. Barrow.

The Sky.

It is a strange thing how little in general people know about the sky. It is the part of creation in which Nature has done more for the sake of pleasing man—more for the sole and evident purpose of talking to him and teaching him than in any other of her works; and it is just the part in which we least attend to her. There are not many of her other works in which some more material or essential purpose than the mere pleasing of man is not answered by every part of their organization; but every essential purpose of the sky might, so far as we know, be answered if once in three days or there-abouts, a great, ugly, black rain-cloud were brought up over the blue, and everything well watered, and so all left blue again till next time, with perhaps a film of morning and evening mist for dew, and instead of this, there is not a moment of any day of our lives when Nature is not producing scene after scene, picture after picture, glory after glory, and working still upon such exquisite and constant principles of the most perfect beauty, that it is quite certain* it is all done for us, and intended for our perpetual pleasure. And every man wherever placed, however far from other sources of interest or of beauty, has this doing for him constantly. The noblest scenes of the earth can be seen and known but by few; it is not intended that man should always live in the midst of them; he injures them by his presence, he ceases to feel them if he is always with them; but the sky is for all; bright as it is, it is not

> Too bright nor good
> For human nature's daily food;

it is fitted in all its functions for the perpetual comfort and exalting of the heart,—for soothing it, and purifying it from its dross and dust. Sometimes gentle, sometimes capricious, sometimes awful—never the same for two moments together; almost human in its passions, almost spiritual in its tenderness, almost divine in its infinity, its appeal to what is immortal in us is as distinct as its ministry of chastisement or of blessing to what is mortal is essential. And yet we never attend to it, we never make it a subject of thought but as it has to do with our animal sensations, we look upon all by which it speaks to us more clearly than to brutes, upon all which bears witness to the intentions of the Surpreme that we are to receive more from the covering vault than the light and the dew which we share with the weed and the worm, as only a succession of meaningless and monotonous accidents, too common and too vain to be worthy of a moment of watchfulness, or a glance of admiration. If in our moments of utter idleness and insipidity we turn to the sky as a last resource, which of its phenomena do we speak of? One says, it has been wet; and another, it has been windy; and another, it has been warm. Who among the whole chattering crowd can tell one of the forms and precipices of the chain of tall, white mountains that girded the horizon at noon yesterday? Who saw the narrow sunbeam that came out of the south, and smote upon their summits until they melted and mouldered away in a dust of blue rain? Who saw the dance of the dead clouds when the sunlight left

* At least, I thought so, when I was four-and-twenty. At five-and-fifty I fancy that it is just possible there may be other creatures in the universe to be pleased, or—it may be—displeased by the weather.

them last night, and the west wind blew them before it, like withered leaves? All has passed unregretted as unseen.

JOHN RUSKIN.

The Triennial Conference.

The great gathering of the clans will take place at Leicester in the first week of April. The committee have arranged an attractive bill of fare, and we have no doubt there will be a full number of guests for the seats at the tables. The town of Leicester has many attractions. The antiquarian will delight in its relics of other days: the modern man, for whom antiquity has no charm, will delight in its go-ahead character. It has long been a stronghold of Nonconformity, and dwells with loving remembrance on the names of Robert Hall, Dr. Legge, J. P. Mursell, Allanson Picton, and J. P. Hopps. The Great Meeting is one of the most interesting of our 18th century chapels. With no architectural pretensions it is an exceedingly comfortable place of worship, and has an earnest and devoted congregation. Under its present able and genial minister (Mr. Gow), the Great Meeting has entered on a fresh lease of prosperity. The second congregation (the Free Christian Church), under the ministry of Mr. Whitaker, is in "the agonies and energies" of building, and is now worshipping in its new and handsome lecture hall on the Narborough Road. But as Leicester has only these two churches, the strain of entertaining the conference will be greater than in places like Manchester and Leeds, and we greatly admire the courage and hospitality of our friends in tackling so large an order. The meetings begin on Tuesday, April 3, and will be continued until mid-day on Friday. Among the speakers and readers of papers will be Mrs. Humphry Ward, the Earl of Carlisle, Dr. Blake Odgers, Q.C., Messrs. A. H. Worthington, B.A., R. D. Holt, David Ainsworth, Cogan Conway, and the Revs. J. E. Carpenter, C. C. Coe, Walter Lloyd, John Byles, P. H. Wicksteed, J. P. Hopps, L. P. Jacks, Brooke Herford, E. I. Fripp, and Joseph Wood. The sermon will be preached by the Rev. C. Hargrove, M.A. A large gathering is already assured, and we have no doubt the week's meetings will be full of sustained interest.

Shakespeare's Natural History.

It is surprising that so profuse and prodigal a poet as Shakespeare, and one so bold in his dealings with human nature, should seldom or never make a mistake in his dealings with physical nature, or take an unwarranted liberty with her. True it is that his allusions to nature are always incidental—never his main purpose or theme, as with many later poets; yet his accuracy and closeness to fact, and his wide and various knowledge of unbookish things, are seen in his light "touch and go" phrases and comparisons as clearly as in his deliberate and central work.

In "Much Ado about Nothing," Benedick says to Margaret:—

> "Thy wit is as quick as the grey-hound's mouth—it catches."

One marked difference between the grey-hound and all other hounds and dogs is, that it can pick up its game while running at full speed, a fact that no other dog can do. The fox-hound, or farm-dog, will run over a fox or a rabbit many times without being able to seize it.

In "Twelfth Night," the Clown tells Viola that

> "Fools are as like husbands as pilchards are to herrings —the husband's the bigger."

The pilchard closely resembles the herring, but is thicker and heavier, with larger scales.

In the same play, Maria, seeing Malvolio coming, says:—

> "Here comes the trout that must be caught with tickling."

Shakespeare, then, knew that fact so well known to poachers, and known also to many an English school-boy, namely, that a trout likes to be tickled, or behaves as if he did, and that by tickling his sides and belly you can so mesmerise him, as it were, that he will allow you to get your hands in a position to clasp him firmly. Indeed Shakespeare seems to have known intimately the ways and habits of most of the wild creatures of Britain. He had the kind of knowledge of them that only the countryman has.

In "As You Like It," Jaques tells Amiens—

> "I can suck melancholy out of a song as a weasel sucks eggs."

Every gamekeeper, and every farmer for that matter, knows how destructive the weasel and its kind are to birds' egg, and to the eggs of game birds and all domestic fowls.

In "Love's Labour Lost," Biron says of Boyet:—

"This fellow picks up wit as pigeons peas."

Pigeons do not pick up peas in America, but they do in England, and are often very damaging to the farmer on that account. Shakespeare knew also the peculiar manner in which they feed their young—a manner that has perhaps given rise to the expression—"Sucking dove."

In "As You Like It," is this passage:—

Celia—"Here comes Monsieur Le Beau."
Rosalind—"With his mouth full of news."
Celia—"Which he will put on us as pigeons feed their young."
Rosalind—"Then shall we be news-crammed."

When the mother-pigeon feeds her young, she brings the food, not in her beak like other birds, but in her crop; she places her beak between the open mandibles of her young, and fairly crams the food, which is delivered by a peculiar pumping movement, down its throat. She furnishes a capital illustration of the eager, persistent news-monger.

Out of their burrows like rabbits after rain,

is a comparison that occurs in "Coriolanus," and is exactly descriptive.

Shakespeare knew the birds and wild-fowl, and knew them perhaps as a hunter, as well as a poet. At least this passage would indicate as much:—

As wild geese that the creeping fowler eye,
Or russet-pated choughs, many in sort,
Rising and cawing at the gun's report,
Sever themselves and madly sweep the sky.

In calling the choughs "russet-pated," he makes the bill tinge the whole head, or perhaps gives the effect of the birds' marking when seen at a distance; the bill is red, the head is black. The chough is a species of crow.

A poet must know the birds well to make one of his characters say, when he had underestimated a man—

"I took this lark for a bunting,"

as Lafen says of Parolles in "All's Well that Ends Well."

The English bunting *(emberiza miliaria)* is a field bird like the lark, and much resembles the latter in form and colour, but it is far inferior as a songster. Indeed Shakespeare shows his familiarity with nearly all the British birds—

The ousel-cock, so black of hue,
With orange-tawny bill,
The throstle with his note so true,
The wren with little quill."

The finch, the sparrow, and the lark,
The plain-song cuckoo grey,
Whose note full many a man doth mark,
And dares not answer nay.

In "Much Ado About Nothing" we get a glimpse of the lapwing—

For look where Beatrice, like a lapwing, runs close by the ground to hear our conference.

The lapwing is a kind of plover, and is very swift of foot. When trying to avoid being seen, they run rapidly with depressed heads, or "close by the ground," as the poet puts it.

In the same scene, Hero says of Ursula—

"I know her spirits are as coy and wild as haggards of the rock."

The laggard falcon (*falco peregrinus*) is a species of hawk found in North Wales and in Scotland. It breeds on high shelving cliffs and precipitous rocks. Had Shakespeare been an "amateur poacher" in his youth? He had a poacher's knowledge of the wild creatures. He knew how fresh the snake appeared after it had cast its skin; how the hedgehog makes himself up into a ball, and leaves his "prickles" in whatever touches him; how the butterfly came from the grub; how the fox carries the goose; where the squirrel hides his store; where the martlet builds its nest, etc.

"Now is the woodcock near the gin,"

says Fabian, in "Twelfth Night," and

"Stalk on, stalk on; the fowl sits,"

says Claudio to Leonato, in "Much Ado About Nothing."

"Instruct thee how
To snare the nimble marmozet,"

says Caliban, in "The Tempest. Sings the fool in "Lear"—

The hedge-sparrow fed the cuckoo so long
That it had its head bit off by its young.

The hedge-sparrow is one of the favourite birds upon which the European cuckoo imposes the rearing of its young. If Shakespeare had made the house-sparrow, or the blackbird, or the

bunting, or any of the graniferous, hard-billed birds, the foster-parent of the cuckoo, his natural history would have been at fault.

Shakespeare knew the flowers, too, and knew their times and seasons :—

When daisies pied, and violets blue,
And lady-smocks all silver-white,
And cuckoo-buds of yellow hue,
Do paint the meadows with delight.

In England the daffodil blooms in February and March ; the swallow comes in April usually ; hence the truth of Shakespeare's lines :—

Daffodils,
That come before the swallow dares, and take
The winds of March with beauty.

The only flaw I notice in Shakespeare's natural history is in his treatment of the honey-bee, but this was a flaw in the knowledge of the times as well. The history of this insect was not rightly read till long after Shakespeare wrote. He pictures a colony of bees as a kingdom with

A king and officers of sorts

(see "Henry V.") whereas a colony of bees is an absolute democracy ; the rulers and governors and "officers of sorts" are the workers, the masses, the common people. A strict regard to fact also would spoil those fairy tapers in "Midsummer Night's Dream"—

The honey-bags steal from the humble bees,
And, for night-tapers, crop their waxen thighs,
And light them at the fiery glow-worm's eyes.

Since it is not wax that bees bear upon their thighs, but pollen, the dust of the flowers, with which the bees make their bread. Wax is made from honey.

The science or the meaning is also a little obscure in this phrase, which occurs in one of the plays—

One heat another heat expels—

as one nail drives out another, or as one love cures another.

In a passage in "The Tempest," he speaks of the ivy as if it were parasitical, like the mistletoe :—

Now, he was
The ivy which had hid my princely trunk,
And sucked my verdue out on't.

I believe it is not a fact that the ivy sucks the juice out of the trees it climbs upon, though it may much interfere with their growth. Its aerial rootlets are for support alone, as is the case with all climbers that are not twiners. But this may perhaps be regarded as only a poetic licence on the part of Shakespeare ; the human ivy he was picturing no doubt fed upon the trees that supported it, whether the real ivy does or not.

It is also probably untrue that

The poor beetle that we tread upon,
In corporal sufferance finds a pang as great
As when a giant dies,

though it has suited the purpose of other poets besides Shakespeare to say so. The higher and more complex the organisation, the more acute the pleasure and the pain. A toad has been known to live for days with the upper part of its head cut away by a scythe, and a beetle will survive for hours upon the fisherman's hook. It, perhaps, causes a grasshopper less pain to detach one of its legs than it does a man to remove a single hair from his beard. Nerves alone feel pain, and the nervous system of a beetle is a very rudimentary affair.

In "Coriolanus" there is a comparison, which implies that a man can tread upon his own shadow—a difficult feat in northern countries at all times, except at mid-day ; Shakespeare is particular to mention the time of day :—

Such a nature,
Tickled with good success, disdains the shadow
Which he treads on at noon.

JOHN BURROUGHS.

"The United Brethren of Devon and Cornwall."

This little pamphlet contains a brightly-written account of one of the earliest of our ministerial associations. Mr. Priestley Paine has made a good use of his materials, and his historical paper, which was read at the 244th annual meeting of the "brethren," held at Exeter, in June, 1899, is published at the request of his brethren. Copies (1s. 6d. each, post free), can be obtained of the author, 18, Hooley Range, Heaton Moor, near Stockport.

Time dieth ever, is ever born :
On the footsteps of night so treadeth the morn ;
Shades and brightness, death and birth,
Chasing each other o'er the round earth.
But the Spirit of Time from his tomb is springing,
The dust of decay from his pinions flinging ;
Ever renewing his glorious youth,
Scattering around him the dew of Truth.
Oh ! let it raise in the wintry heart
Fountains and flowers that shall never depart !
This spirit will fill us with thought sublime,
For the *End of God* is the Spirit of Time.

—*Geo Macdonald.*

Better Things.

Better to smell a violet,
Than sip the careless wine;
Better to list one music tone,
Than watch the jewels' shine.

Better to have the love of one,
Than smiles like morning dew;
Better to have a living seed,
Than flowers of every hue.

Better to feel a love within,
Than be lovely to the sight;
Better a homely tenderness,
Than beauty's wild delight.

Better to love than be beloved,
Though lonely all the day;
Better the fountain in the heart,
Than the fountain by the way.

Better a feeble love to God,
Than for women's love to pine;
Better to have the making God,
Than the women made divine.

Better be fed by mother's hand,
Than eat alone at will;
Better to trust in God, than say:
My goods my storehouse fill.

Better to be a little wise,
Than learned overmuch;
Better than high are lowly thoughts,
For truthful thoughts are such.

Better than thrill a listening crowd,
Sit at a wise man's feet;
But better teach a child, than toil
To make thyself complete.

Better to walk the realm unseen,
Than watch the hour's event;
Better the smile of God alway,
Than the voice of men's consent.

Better to have a quiet grief,
Than a tumultuous joy;
Better than manhood, age's face,
If the heart be of a boy.

Better the thanks of one dear heart,
Than a nation's voice of praise;
Better the twilight ere the dawn,
Than yesterday's mid-blaze.

Better a death when work is done,
Than earth's most favoured birth;
Better a child in God's great house,
Than the king of all the earth.

—GEO. MACDONALD.

Let in the Light.

How few of us realise what a very important part light and sunshine play in our lives—what an enormous share they have in promoting our well-being! Let a person persistently ensconce himself on the *shady* side of his house, in rooms where "sunshine hath not leave to dwell," and where light enters either at second-hand or grudgingly, owing to adjacent bricks and mortar, and that mortal grows melancholy, cynical, and in all probability, dyspeptic. Let the careful housewife save her curtains and carpets by forbidding a single lath of the Venetians to be turned, and some night she will wake up with a pang of anxiety as she recalls the pale faces of her children, vaguely speculating as to the absence of roses from their cheeks.

Why do we bank up our celery? Not, surely, for the sake of finding employment for the gardener. No; but to bleach the celery and prevent the plant from attaining its natural, healthy greenness, which, for some strange reason, is distasteful to our palates. We force the earliest signs of vitality from bulbs by hiding them in a cellar or dark cupboard, and what is the result? Their shoots are almost colourless. Then we bring them by gradual stages from obscurity, through twilight into daylight, and next to the free sunshine. For we know full well that perfection of growth can only be obtained through the medium of air and sun.

Now, what I am coming to is this. When sorrow casts its awful shadow over us, why do we immediately make our condition tenfold worse by proceeding to shut out God's dear sunshine from our midst? The very first thing we do is to thrust aside every scrap of bright colour, put away the children's pretty frocks and sashes, and surround ourselves with everything that makes for wretchedness and depression. In fact, we conscientiously do all that lies in our power to render our household as hopelessly miserable as possible.

This end has been further achieved by the exclusion of all the daylight, and even our garden door had best remain fast shut, lest that oblong of lovely golden sunshine thrown upon the hall floor should seem to suggest that *all* is not blackest night, both without and within.

Even our back windows must be shrouded (including the nursery), because the neighbours on that side might talk. Respect for the dead leads us to pander to a stupid conventionalism, and we cringe before public opinion in this instance, in spite of frequently expressed contempt in the past, for others who have followed the same lead.

Let us be wiser in this present day and generation, and decide for ourselves what is the best course to pursue—then inflexibly follow that course, looking neither to the right nor to the left to note the aspect of friend or critic. As in seasons of spiritual darkness, so in hours of heart-breaking sorrow, let in the light. When floods of doubt sweep us from our moorings and threaten to bear us out of sight of the familiar shore, do we sullenly plunge our heads beneath the dark surface, fold our hands, and without an effort, yield to a quite unnecessary doom? No, we stretch out and feel for a friendly grasp, and find it, too; we cry aloud, and a voice answers back.

Helping hand and cheering voice come in this case from human sympathy, or from the silent counsel of those whose stored-up wisdom waits patiently on our shelves. We open some precious volume and, lo, the light streams forth! Whereas we were blind, now we see. How great was that darkness which bewildered us a little while ago! How keen, how splendid this light which now illumines every corner of our being!

If in the spiritual then, why not in the physical conditions of our life? Why sit in darkness when all that is gracious and beneficent is waiting to come in? With what admirable persistence the tiny sunbeam squeezes itself through the most uninviting crevice, scorning neither keyhole nor shutter chink, but pressing steadily in, triumphant over every hindrance!

Up with the blinds then and draw back those heavy curtains. Throw doors and windows wide open, that the sweet breath of God may come in and circle round about us all. Perhaps God Himself will enter also, if He is not here already. Away with billows of sable stuffs, too. Let us discuss this subject of mourning in the family, like any other topic, and by so doing the wishes of each member will be known and can be carried out. Sad it is, though not infrequent, when such wishes, clearly expressed, are disregarded! Mrs. Grundy expects this and that observance to be complied with, and, after all, it is less difficult to conform to custom than to oppose public opinion; and so we may go in the old, worn track, and the loved one's wishes are disregarded. He whispers, vainly, to our inner conscience. The world so real, so hard, so cruel, with its critical looks and relentless tongue—*it* will ostracise us. So, at any price, the dear world must be appeased. We must speak it fair and keep its too-easily ruffled plumage as smooth as may be.

Darkened house! Wan-faced troop! Would not our tribute of sorrow prove equally acceptable, ascending from accustomed household routine, common, daily garb, and sun-flooded floors?—RUTH MILLS.

"THE SEED SOWER."

A Magazine of Liberal Christianity for the Church, the Home, and the School.

Editor: REV. JOSEPH WOOD.

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